

DS

149

T577a

TOLKOWSKY

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROS-
PECTS IN PALESTINE

A
A
0
0
1
1
2
6
0
2
2
1



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Pa

chievements and Prospects in Palestine

by

S. TOLKOWSKY

(JAFFA)

Published by the English Zionist Federation,
69, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C. 3.

1917.

[Price 4d.; Post Free, 4½d.]



Achievements and Prospects in Palestine.

BY S. TOLKOWSKY.

DS

149

T 577a

3-8-24 M.
THE history of the new Jewish settlement in Palestine offers certain peculiar features which make it difficult, if not impossible, for the student to classify it under any of the hitherto known and described types of colonization. A people of shepherds and farmers driven from its home and scattered throughout the world, deprived by laws or by circumstances of the possibility of acquiring land and of following agricultural pursuits, has been forced, in order to preserve itself, to turn to commerce and to become a people of traders and of middlemen. Habit is second nature, especially with Semites, whose power of adaptation to varying external conditions probably exceeds that of any other race; and eighteen centuries of remoteness from the land have wrought deep-seated changes in the psychology of the Jewish people. The Jew has become estranged from the soil and from all that relates to it. Not only has he lost the simple tastes and ideals of the husbandman, but the equability of mind and the conservatism of the agriculturist—a conservatism which is valuable so long as it is moderate—have given place in the Jew to a restiveness, an impulsiveness, a certain spirit of speculation and adventure, which are utterly incompatible with successful agricultural work. Here lie the deeper reasons of the failure of the various colonizing experiments that have been made with Jews in the Argentine, in Brazil, and in the United States of America.

The various groups of students and other "Lovers of Zion" who, early in the eighties of the last century, made their way from Russia and Roumania to Palestine with the intention of founding there the first few agricultural settlements, had, of course, to labour under the same difficulties. They were all children of the towns; none of them had the slightest know-

ledge of agriculture. Moreover, the conditions of the country to which they came were entirely different from anything that they had ever seen before. Ignorant of the language and the customs of the Arab inhabitants, unacquainted with the local laws, unfamiliar with those elementary principles of hygiene the non-observance of which could not remain unpunished in a country where malaria-fever and other epidemic diseases were rampant, these first pioneers of Jewish colonization in Palestine found themselves confronted with a task the execution of which exceeded by far the possibilities of their very limited financial means and their still less adequate technical training.

The difficulties resulting from their unpreparedness were intensified yet further by the unfavourable conditions prevailing in the country. Public safety was only a word in Palestine at that time. Public hygiene did not receive the least attention from the authorities, and the result was that the most important inland towns, as well as the greatest part of the maritime plain, were infested with malaria-fever and different eye-diseases. There were no physicians, no chemists, no hospitals. There was as yet not a single railway line, and the few roads existing of old had been so neglected that they had become absolutely impracticable; in fact, carriages, camels and horses used to travel through the fields alongside the roads, the latter serving only to show the right way. Cattle-breeding was almost impossible, because ever-recurring epidemics, which nobody attempted to fight, were allowed every two or three years to ravage the herds throughout the country. As for agriculture proper, there was no expert guidance as to which plants could most profitably be grown, and as to the methods of growing them; and in the absence of any guidance in this respect, the only way open to the Jewish settlers was to take a lead from the surrounding Arab population and to try to imitate as best they could the methods used by them. Unfortunately, however, the fellaheen, with their typical oriental lack of foresight, which makes them constantly sacrifice the future to the present, have no other principle of agriculture than to try to make their fields yield as

much as they can with their very primitive methods, and without ever troubling themselves about destroying weeds, removing stones, or even maintaining the fertility of the soil by replacing in the shape of manures the elements which the crops have taken away. It does not need the mind of an expert to understand that centuries of such treatment must have resulted in a heavy strain upon the once proverbial natural fertility of the soil of Palestine ; but although in consequence of this decrease of fertility the yields of the crops have become very poor, they are still sufficient to meet the needs of the Arab population, whose standard of living is extremely low. Not so with the Jewish immigrants, who brought with them requirements, in the matters of food, clothing, housing and hygiene, much more refined and much more difficult to satisfy. No doubt the soil can be cleaned of stones and weeds, its fertility can be restored and even increased ; but this requires technical knowledge and considerable financial means, and the first Jewish colonists had neither. What happened was that when they had paid the purchase price for their land, when they had built their primitive cottages, when seeds and tools had been purchased, the colonists found that they had spent most of their funds before they had even gathered in their first meagre crop. And when the first crop, and the second, turned out to be utterly insufficient to furnish a living for the colonists and their families, the conviction dawned upon them that there must be something wrong in their work, and that a radical change of method was indispensable. But the available funds had been spent, and from without no adequate help was to be expected. In Russia the Choveve-Zion movement was still in its infancy, and commanded but small financial means ; whilst western Jewry, which had not yet been stirred by the call of Theodor Herzl, was ignorant of the very existence of the handful of pioneers who were struggling against overwhelming odds in their attempts to initiate the self-emancipation of the Jewish people in its historic home.

It was at this critical moment, in 1884, that Baron Edmond de Rothschild intervened. Having learnt

by chance of the difficulties with which the young Jewish colonies were struggling, he sent out experts to Palestine with instructions to enquire into the causes of their difficulties and to determine the means to be employed for their removal. As a result of these enquiries, Baron Rothschild decided to take under his protection the four colonies whose situation was most embarrassing. His experts had rightly concluded that the exclusive cultivation of cereals neither provided sufficient income for the immediate sustenance of the colonists and their families, nor offered any favourable prospects for the future, and that it was necessary therefore to devote at least a part of the land to the cultivation of fruit trees. Accordingly, by order of the Baron large vineyards were planted with the best varieties of French vines, and at Rishon-le-Zion large wine-cellars were built with a total capacity of 1,650,000 gallons. At the same time, Baron Rothschild founded several new colonies both in Judæa and in Galilee on similar lines. The example of these colonies, where the creation of vineyards had given work to a large number of settlers and labourers, induced other colonies to plant vines on a big scale, and to neglect almost completely the cultivation of any other crop. Monoculture, the exclusive cultivation of one plant, involves considerable risks even under normal conditions; in times of stress it generally proves fatal to those who have made it the basis of their economic life. Whilst the Jewish colonies were multiplying their vineyards, the price of wine on the European markets had begun to fall; and by the time that the Palestinian vineyards were reaching their full productivity, the price of wine had fallen so low that the piece of land possessed by each settler no longer yielded a nett profit sufficient to supply the needs of his family. In order to save the colonists from destitution, the Baron's administration, at very considerable sacrifice, went on taking over the wine at an artificial price high enough to allow the colonists to live. But, in consequence of the increasing yield of the vineyards, the deficit resulting from the difference between the price at which the administration bought wine from the colonists and the price at which it sold the same

wine on the European markets soon became so enormous, that the Baron was forced to admit that it would be impossible for him to continue the system indefinitely. He realised that radical reforms were needed, and that they could not lead to good results save through an organisation specially prepared for colonizing work. He approached the Jewish Colonization Association (the "Ica"), and concluded with it an agreement whereby the Ica undertook to re-organize his Palestinian colonies.

In order to mitigate the manifold drawbacks and dangers of monoculture, the Ica bought good arable land, specially adapted for the cultivation of cereals and other annual plants, in the immediate neighbourhood of the vine colonies, and divided this land among the colonists. At the same time, 352 vine planters were grouped into a syndicate known as the "Co-operative Society of the Great Cellars of Rishon-le-Zion and Zichron-Jacob." This syndicate took over the cellars, the existing wine and the claims, and was granted sufficient working capital to manage the whole business. A special company for the sale of the wine was formed under the name of "Carmel," with agencies in many countries; the Palestine Wine and Trading Company, of London, is affiliated to it. Measures were taken without delay for reducing production, so as to keep it always proportionate to sale; and in four years the production was reduced from 1,430,000 gallons to 528,000 gallons, that is to say, by about two-thirds. This result was obtained by uprooting hundreds of acres of vineyards and planting olives, almonds and oranges in their place. The sacrifice was heavy, but it met with its reward, and to-day wine-growing and the wine-trade are established on a sound basis and are one of the main sources of wealth in the country. In general, by a wisely conceived administration, which aimed at making the conduct of affairs pass gradually into the hands of the colonists themselves, the Ica strove to awaken the spirit of initiative among the settlers and to develop their best energies. But, although the Ica succeeded to a great extent in these educational efforts, the atmosphere of bureaucratic philanthropy in which its work and that of the Baron had necessarily

been carried on had deeply affected the *morale* of the colonists. Their own helplessness in face of threatening disaster and their entire dependence on help from without had destroyed their confidence in themselves and weakened their will and their power to pull through in bad times. The necessity of remaining at all costs on good terms with the agents through whom financial help was doled out produced an unhealthy atmosphere of servile obedience on the one side and of a somewhat autocratic favouritism on the other. Under the influence of the short period of relative prosperity through which they had passed—a prosperity not earned by their own efforts—the lofty idealism that had bid the colonists emigrate to Palestine fifteen or twenty years before had largely vanished and given place to more materialistic tendencies; their whole outlook had undergone a considerable change, and instead of bringing up their children on the land and in such a way as to make them Palestinian farmers, many had begun to send them to the numerous schools which the *Alliance*, the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* and the Anglo-Jewish Association were creating in the towns, and where an education given in French, German, or English was preparing the young generation for future emigration to European or American countries. In short, whilst the immediate material situation of the colonists had been greatly improved, the future of the national settlement was being gravely imperilled: on the one hand by the tendency to emigrate, which was fast spreading among the young; on the other hand, and in a much more dangerous manner, by the changes which had taken place in the character, in the temperament and in the general spirit of the colonists. The outlook was dark indeed, when the Zionist Organization appeared on the scene.

The publication of Herzl's "Jewish State" and the first few Zionist Congresses had no great influence upon the conditions prevailing in the colonies. The colonists had experienced once before the framing of grand colonizing projects by the Choveve-Zion and the subsequent dwindling of these grand projects into the subsidizing of a few particular colonies and the founding or subsidizing of a few schools; and

where Russian Jewry with its deep national consciousness had failed, was it likely that western Jewry would succeed? Besides, was not the newly founded Zionist Organization opposed to immediate practical work in Palestine?

But in 1903 the Anglo-Palestine Co., Ltd., the most important financial institution of the Zionist Organization, opened its first office at Jaffa and started upon the difficult task of the economic education of the colonists. By the introduction of short-term credits on the security of goods or bills of exchange, by granting long-term credits guaranteed by the produce of the plantations or by the rent of houses, and by encouraging the formation of co-operative credit societies based on the joint guarantee of the members, the Bank succeeded in organizing in Palestine a modern system of credit; while by taking an active share in promoting the constitution of dairy associations and of co-operative societies for the importation of raw materials and for the export of the fruits, it contributed in a large measure to the consolidation of the financial position of a number of colonies and of many individual settlers.

A few years after the foundation of the Anglo-Palestine Co., the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization was opened at Jaffa. Originally this office was intended to act merely as the agent of the Zionist Executive for the supervision of the organization's colonization work in Palestine. In practice, however, the Palestine Office was led to assume responsibility for many different activities, some of which in other countries are fulfilled by the government. The Palestine Office indeed soon acquired great prestige both with the colonists and with the Ottoman Government. The colonists became accustomed to invoke its intervention whenever they had an important matter to settle with the local or the central government authorities; and as a result of the repeated intervention of the Palestine Office on behalf of the colonists the authorities on their side have come to consider the head of the Office as the *de facto* representative of the Jewish population of the country. Considering that the whole inner administration of the Jewish colonies and the relations

of the colonies with each other are conducted on the lines of the most complete local autonomy, it is easy to understand the great importance of the political rôle which the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization has come to play. The question whether the Zionist Organization represents the Jewish masses at large exists to-day only in the countries of the *Galuth* ; in Palestine this question has long since been settled, the official representatives of the Zionist Organization having become, by tacit consent of the Jews and of the Government, the "porte-parole," or spokesmen, of Palestinian Jewry as a whole.

The Palestine Office supervises also the colonizing activity of the Jewish National Fund and the Palestine Land Development Co. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the many-sided activities of these two institutions. From the purely technical point of view much of their work calls for serious criticism ; but from the national point of view they have rendered invaluable services. The farms and plantations which they have created in Judæa, in Samaria and in Galilee, and in which only Jewish workmen are employed, have become centres of the revival, where the most ardent nationalist spirit is fostered. That spirit has communicated itself to the younger generation in the surrounding colonies, and from the children it has passed on to their parents, with the result that within a few years the whole atmosphere of the old colonies has undergone a fundamental change. The flame of national enthusiasm has been revived, scepticism has given place to hope and confidence in the future ; the colonists have realised that they are no more the sad survivors of a premature and unhappy colonizing experiment, but that they have become the pioneers, the vanguard of a world movement which has waited for its time, but which is now on the way, slowly but surely and irresistibly, to Zion. The consciousness that all the hopes of this world movement centre around that first nucleus of national life represented by our colonies in Palestine has penetrated the colonists with a deep sense of responsibility, and has restored to them the confidence in themselves which they had lost under the well-meant tutelage of their philanthropic protectors. It would take us too far

to depict in detail how deep this change has gone and what important practical consequences it has already begotten ; it is only necessary to mention the splendid revival of the Hebrew language in Palestine and the strong attitude which the colonists took up and the pecuniary sacrifices that they made in defence of Hebrew when, a few years ago, the *Hilfsverein* attempted to interfere with the normal course of the hebraization of our schools. As to the staying qualities of the colonists, their power to resist difficulties, their will and determination to cleave to the land of our fathers at any price, these are qualities which are to-day beyond dispute. If proof were required, no argument could be more eloquent than the fact that when Turkey entered the war in October, 1914, and the Turkish authorities gave the Jews belonging to enemy nations the option of becoming Ottoman subjects or leaving the country, many Jewish inhabitants of the towns and agricultural labourers left the country, but not one colonist.

The spirit of which such facts are but isolated expressions has not remained confined to the colonists and workmen, but has pervaded all classes of Palestinian Jewry ; and its intensity is such that willingly or unwillingly the non-Zionist institutions in the country, if they wanted their work to be successful, have had to adapt themselves to the spirit of the times. Not only in their methods of work, but in the very spirit in which their institutions are conducted, they have had to conform to the new demands. Many illustrations of this evolution might be given. The most remarkable, perhaps, is that furnished by the Agricultural School of the Alliance Israélite at Mikveh Israel. The writer still remembers how, in 1911, the language of instruction there was French, while as to the general tendency of the school the then director (who, by-the-by, was not an agriculturist) said himself : "The object of our school is to give the boys a practical education which will enable them to find a living in North America or in the Argentine." In 1914, a few months before the outbreak of war, and shortly after Baron Rothschild's visit to Palestine, a new director was appointed in the person of a well-known Palestinian Zionist, who is also a capable

scientifically trained agriculturist, and he undertook without delay the systematic hebraization of the school. Those who know the previous attitude of the *Alliance Israélite* in these matters will be able to appreciate at its full value the importance of the change that has taken place in the moral condition of our Palestinian colonization.

No less remarkable is the progress that has been achieved in the material situation of the colonies. It would be easy to give examples in almost every branch of activity. It could be shown how, in order to make good the lack of means of communication, the Jews have improved the existing roads and constructed new ones; how by planting hundreds of thousands of eucalyptus trees they have improved the hygienic conditions in various parts of the country; how by means of a systematic and scientifically conducted campaign they are gradually stamping out trachoma and other eye diseases which are among the scourges of the East; how, in the absence of any serious intervention on the part of the authorities on behalf of public safety, they have themselves organized in and around their colonies a service of rural police, which has become so efficient that lately even the German non-Jewish settlers of Sarona, near Jaffa, have entrusted to Jewish watchmen the responsibility for the safety of their village and plantations. One could depict Tel-Aviv and the other modern suburbs which the Jews have built and are still building in the vicinity of Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem, Jewish townlets which are real object lessons in European cleanliness and hygiene; one could dilate on the splendid progress made by our Hebrew schools, or the very efficient judicial system which the Jews have built up in the colonies and in the towns, and which is based exclusively on arbitration. But it would be impossible to do justice to all these aspects of the subject within the limits of a short essay; and isolated facts are of less importance than the tendencies underlying those facts and the spirit that has made them possible. It may suffice, therefore, to indicate here some of the technical successes achieved in the field of agriculture, in which the present writer may claim special knowledge.

The writer has often been asked : how do the Jews get on as farmers in Palestine ? Are they more successful there than, for example, in the Argentine ? Undoubtedly they are ; and it is even interesting to note that in Palestine it is precisely in agriculture more than in any other field of activity that the Jews have been successful. They have not yet achieved equal successes in all branches of agricultural work ; the reason is that they have not yet had sufficient practice in certain of them. But, in those agricultural undertakings in which they have had at least ten or fifteen years' practice, they have shown themselves equal to the most progressive farmers of advanced agricultural countries. The value of their work can best be judged by comparing the yields of their crops with the yields of the crops of the surrounding Arab inhabitants. With the Arabs the cereals (wheat and barley) yield an average gross produce of about £1 per acre ; in the better Jewish colonies, the fields yield up to £2 and £3 and more. In Arab orange-groves, 350 cases of oranges per acre are considered a very good average crop ; Jewish orange-groves, as a rule, yield about 40-50 per cent. more, and in the last year before the war a yield of no less than 757 cases—that is, more than double the Arab yield—was obtained. Arab vineyards do not yield as a rule more than £6 to £7 value of gross produce per acre ; the Jewish vine-planters obtain an average of £12 to £13. The milch cows of the fellaheen give an average of 130 to 160 gallons of milk per annum ; those of the Jewish colonies at Benshemen, Ekron and Artuf give about 440 gallons and more. These figures are an eloquent testimony to the skill of the Jewish colonist. No doubt, success or failure of the crops are in close dependence on external conditions, such as the soil, the climate, the water supply. But these conditions are the same for the Arabs as for the Jews. We must, therefore, look to other factors for the explanation of the higher yields obtained by the Jewish colonists ; and we may safely conclude that these factors must be sought in the character of the Jews themselves. Personally, the writer does not hesitate to ascribe the good results obtained to three qualities

which are developed to a high degree in most of the colonists, namely their manual skill, their business-like methods and their progressive (one might even say their scientific) spirit. As a proof of the superior manual skill of the Jewish agricultural labourers, it may be mentioned that in the course of the last few years Arab landowners have repeatedly entrusted Jewish labourers with the creation of new plantations, and especially with the execution of such delicate work as the pruning and grafting of their fruit-trees. Of the businesslike methods of the settlers, no better proof is required than the fact that on the one hand the importation of chemical fertilizers, of wood for packing-cases, of paper for wrapping oranges and lemons, and of various other kinds of raw materials, and on the other hand the exportation of all the important agricultural products (wine, oranges, almonds) are carried on by the colonists themselves by means of co-operative societies specially created for the purpose and represented on the chief European markets by their own agents chosen from amongst the members. But most of the success of the colonists is due probably to their typically Jewish perspicacity, which enables them to grasp at once the cardinal points of a problem, and to their progressive spirit, which impels them not to content themselves with half-measures, but to go straight for such methods as will promise them a radical solution of the particular difficulty with which they are confronted. Practical illustrations of this progressive and scientific spirit are met with in Palestine at every step. One day the writer received a visit from a man of about fifty years of age. Judging from his external appearance he might have been thought an orthodox Jerusalem rabbi, or at least one of the types of long-bearded and long-coated Ghetto-Jews with whom Mr. Pilichowski's art has made us acquainted; the very last status that would have been ascribed to him was that of a colonist. In fact, however, the man turned out to be an orange-grower from Petach-Tikvah. Having introduced himself, he asked me whether I could read Italian. I said, "Yes." "Well, then, would you please translate this letter for me?" And he handed me a type-

written document, which, to my great surprise, I found to be a letter written by a well-known professor and specialist in plant diseases at the Agricultural College attached to one of the Italian Universities. The letter ran, more or less, as follows: "The box of insects which you sent to the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome has been forwarded by that Institution to me, with a request to reply direct to your enquiry. The name of the insect is so-and-so. I have made a special study of it, and I am sending you, under separate cover, a book which I have written on this subject. You will find there all the details about the means for combating the insect in question, which is a dangerous parasite of the orange-tree. I should feel obliged if you would kindly inform me of the results you obtain and also if you would communicate to me any new observations which you may make." When I had finished translating the letter, my interlocutor produced the book; and since he did not understand Italian, he presented the book to me on condition that I should translate the most important parts of it for his benefit and for that of his fellow-colonists. The writer knows another orange-grower of Petach-Tikvah, one of the rich men of the colony, who in his youth graduated in France as a horticulturist, and who, although now nearly fifty years old, went to Italy in the summer of 1913, and studied there for several weeks, in the laboratory of another professor, various questions relating to diseases of the orange-tree. One more example: in 1912 the colonists of Judæa, partly subsidized by the Jewish Colonization Association, sent a delegate, a graduate of a horticultural school, to the United States in order to study the best agricultural methods practised in California, Texas and Florida. And it should be added that in July, 1914, there was founded at Mikveh Israel, with the object of improving agriculture and kindred industries, the Palestinian Agricultural Society, which includes among its members a fair number of agronomists, agriculturists and horticulturists who are graduates of various European universities, and also the best practical farmers of the country. These few facts need no further comment; they show eloquently enough the

spirit of thoroughness and the desire for perfection which has been responsible for our past achievements in Palestine, and which justifies our hopes of further and greater achievements in the future.

But we must not forget that, if the quality of our work gives us good ground for satisfaction, its quantity does not. The Jewish population of Palestine numbers only about 100,000 souls out of a total population of 700,000 in the country. The Jewish colonies cover a total area of 110,000 acres, which represents scarcely two per cent. of the entire area of Palestine, and about 11 per cent. of its cultivated surface. The soil of Palestine is, in fact, very badly utilised; only a small part is under cultivation. East of Jordan there are immense territories, almost uninhabited, the soil of which is excellent arable land. These regions, thanks to the Hedjaz railway which crosses them, possess good communications with Asia Minor, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. To-day the whole country east of Jordan does not contain more than 100,000 inhabitants; during the first centuries of the Christian era its population was at least fifteen or twenty times that number, and its fertility made it then one of the granaries of the Roman Empire. It only needs an industrious and intelligent population to recover its pristine fertility and to regain its old economic importance. The same observations apply to the south of Western Palestine, and in a certain measure even to the mountainous lands which constitute the central part of the country. Everywhere there is still room for a dense population. The great question we have to ask ourselves is: does Palestine possess the economic possibilities that will enable a numerous population to live and to expand and to develop into a prosperous and happy community? In the writer's opinion, it does.

The legend goes that the soil of Palestine lacks natural fertility, and that the water supply is not sufficient to make intensive cultivation possible. The fact is that the soil of Palestine, to-day as in ancient times, is remarkably fertile for one who takes the trouble to work it. Apart from a few unimportant exceptions, every foot of land can be utilized for agriculture. Along the Mediterranean shore the plains

run side by side, each richer than the preceding one. First, in the south, comes the plain of Gaza, where the barley for brewing is better than at any other spot in the world ; then, towards the middle part of the coast, round Jaffa, lies the great plain of Sharon, with its soil of clay and chalk, covered with orchards of orange-trees and almond-trees ; to the north are the plain of Esdraelon, whose soil, of basaltic origin, rich in humus, is famous as in days of old for its abundant crops of sesame, and the plain of Beisan, famous for fields of wheat. The limestone hills of Judæa and Samaria were covered in biblical and Roman times with artificially raised terraces of fertile earth maintained by low stone walls and irrigated by means of the rain-water collected in natural pits or rock-hewn cisterns ; thanks to these terraces, the whole of these mountainous regions must have been one uninterrupted stretch of orchards and gardens. Since then, through neglect on the part of the inhabitants, the terraces have been allowed to be destroyed, and the fertile soil of the hills has been washed away. To-day only a very limited number of vineyards and orchards of olive and fig trees exist in the mountains of Judæa. But the restoration of the terraces, which we shall undertake, will undoubtedly turn even these barren rocks once more into "a land flowing with milk and honey." In the so-called "desert of Judæa," which is in fact a steppe and not a desert, numerous flocks of sheep and goats find, even in the dry period of summer, a natural pasturage that suffices for their needs. The valley of the Jordan, a gigantic natural rift whose southern portion lies 1,200 feet below the level of the Mediterranean sea, and which is protected by high mountains both on the east and on the west, owes to these circumstances a climate similar to that of Nubia, and a very rich tropical flora. Finally, beyond the Jordan, there stretch to the south the steppes of Moab, well suited for the breeding of sheep on a large scale ; farther to the north the highlands of Gilead, with their forests of oak and pine and numerous herds of cattle ; and still farther to the north the great fertile tableland of Hauran, renowned for its fields of wheat.

So much for the quality of the soil. As for the moisture necessary for vegetation, the annual average

rainfall (20 to 28 inches) is equal to that of Central Europe; the difference is that all this quantity of water falls within the space of six months, there being no rain between April and October. But this uneven distribution has been met since very ancient times by the construction of cisterns for storing the water from the winter rains; and to-day, with modern appliances, it would be possible to construct large dams for the same purpose in all the mountainous parts of the country.

The six rivers of the plain of Sharon, and the two of the plain of Esdraelon, carry water all the year in the lower part of their courses, while the Jordan and its various tributaries, and the Lake of Tiberias itself, would suffice for the irrigation of all the great valley of the Ghor, which extends for 84 miles from Lake Merom to the Dead Sea. In Galilee, in Gilead and in Jaulan there are numberless little rivulets and springs which could profitably be used for various agricultural purposes. And in the whole coastal plain one needs only dig to a depth of 10 to 80 feet in order to find aquiferous strata which would furnish water for irrigation in quantities sufficient to convert the whole of Philistia and Sharon, that is from Gaza to Haifa, into one great irrigated garden. Finally, the dew itself is so abundant during the summer nights that it is equivalent to a light rain, and furnishes the vegetation with enough moisture to ripen the summer crops, to supply the needs of non-watered trees (olives, figs, almonds, vines), and to maintain on the pastures of the "desert of Judæa" the grass required by the numerous flocks of sheep and goats.

Thus to an impartial scientific examination Palestine reveals itself as a country of great fertility, though this fertility is often latent, and demands certain efforts before it can be called into play. The great differences of height and of climate in the different parts of the country make it possible to cultivate side by side the products of the temperate and of the torrid zones. It is the same with the rearing of domestic animals, which is also susceptible of great development; the Arab thoroughbred, the mule, the caracul sheep of Turkestan, and the ostrich might be bred with considerable profit.

In the sphere of industry the possibilities of development are no less notable. Plantations of olives, almonds, and castor-oil plants, and the cultivation of sesame, ground-nuts, and cotton, render possible the manufacture of oil and soap on a large scale.

The extraction of essential oils and the perfume industry will find abundant raw material in orange-peel and lemon-peel, in the blossoms of geraniums, orange-trees, and roses, as well as in those of the spiny acacias, used all over Judæa for the making of quick-set hedges, and of the wild thyme which abounds at the foot of the mountains of Judæa.

The cultivation of the vine provides a basis for the manufacture of wine, brandy and raisins on an ever-increasing scale.

Palestine imports annually more than £100,000 worth of sugar. Now in the whole coastal plain, and more still in the Jordan valley, the sugar cane thrives excellently, while the plain of Esdraelon and part of Sharon are well suited for the cultivation of beetroot. Hence the sugar industry seems to possess every chance of success; and it would leave very valuable residues in the shape of beetroot slices for the milch cows or of bagasse of cane as manure for the fields. It would also make possible the better utilization of Palestinian horticulture through the manufacture of jam and preserved fruits.

The manufacture of preserves could also profitably utilize the olive and many kinds of vegetables; and when the fishing industry reaches the development which is to be expected from the great length of the coast line, the possibility of obtaining fish and olive oil simultaneously and at a low cost will lead to the manufacture of fish preserves; while here again the residue of fish offal will furnish an excellent manure for agriculture.

In Palestine, where tobacco grows and is of good quality, the cigarette industry should yield at least as good results as in Egypt, where all the tobacco is imported.

Papyrus, which grows wild and in considerable quantities throughout the Jordan valley, might well furnish the raw material for the manufacture of certain fine kinds of paper.

Jaffa imports annually more than £240,000 worth of woollens, and exports large quantities of sheep's and camel's wool. A well-organized spinning industry will find in the country both its raw material and a ready market. Tanning also might profitably be developed, for Palestine exports a large number of hides and imports leather, and good tanning materials are grown in the country.

The building industry, whose importance grows from day to day, and will grow still more in the future in consequence of Jewish immigration, is susceptible of great development. Palestine is poor in natural stones for building purposes, and the manufacture of cement stone has already acquired a certain importance. The cement which is used is imported from abroad; yet in favourable spots in the country we find the material for making cement.

The utilization of the mineral wealth of the country might also form the basis of a large number of industrial enterprises. The Dead Sea and the important beds of Hasbeya produce asphalt of a superior quality. Throughout Transjordan, and notably near Es-Salt, we find numerous beds of phosphate. The water of the Dead Sea, which contains 24.46 per cent. of salts, and its deposits, are rich in potassium and bromides. Petroleum probably exists at various points in the country. In the region of Sidon there are strata of iron ore, red and yellow ochre, and coal. Important deposits of chalk and plaster exist in the mountains of Judæa and the Jordan valley.

There is one more industry that certainly has a big future before it—if indeed it can be called an industry—and that is the tourist industry. Already the peculiar beauty of Palestine, and its wealth in sanctuaries of every creed and in important historical monuments, bring to the country between 15,000 and 18,000 visitors every year. But there are many other things besides in Palestine which might attract the foreigner. Along the coast, where the climate is similar to that of the Riviera, several seaside resorts might with advantage be established. The district round Jericho in winter, the shores of Lake Tiberias in spring, the slopes of Carmel and Tabor in summer, form excellent holiday resorts. In the Jordan valley

and on the western shore of Lake Tiberias, there are many hot sulphurous springs which possess remarkable curative properties for rheumatic complaints, and are obvious starting points for the watering-places of the future. As for lovers of the chase, they will find in Palestine varied and abundant game, such as wild boars, foxes, gazelles, mountain goats, eagles, wild duck, wild pigeons, partridges, teal, and many more. Tourists who visit the East are generally wealthy; so there can be no doubt that a skilful organization of the tourist industry, such as has made the fortune of Switzerland and the Riviera, could become a potent source of prosperity for Palestine.

Before we leave the subject of the industrial possibilities of Palestine, a few words must be said as to the natural power which manufacture and agriculture have at their disposal. The Jordan, with its great differences of level over relatively short distances, develops sufficient power to work great turbines. Some of its tributaries, such as the Wadi-Fedjas, which still shows numerous remains of ancient mills, and the Yarmuk, which forms several cataracts of great height and considerable energy, might supply motive power for a large number of factories; the same is true of the rivers of the coastal plain—the Audja, the Nahr-ez-Zerka, and the Nahr-el-Litani.

The winds are favourable for the installation of aero-motors; that of the Jewish Agricultural Experiment Station works, on an average, eight hours a day.

Electric motive power could also be artificially generated by great central stations, which would find a suitable fuel in the coal strata which exist in the country, in the coarse and otherwise useless straw of sesame, in the timber of the forests of eucalyptus, or in the important layers of peat in the plain which surrounds Lake Merom; or they might, by a process of briquettes similar to that employed in the Soudan, utilize the papyrus and other aquatic plants which grow wild in great quantities all along the Jordan valley.

The agricultural and industrial development of Palestine will both be helped by and stimulate a considerable growth of commerce, for which the position of the country makes it eminently fitted.

Indeed, the geographical situation of Palestine, between the Baghdad Railway and the Suez Canal, between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, which marks it out as the predestined junction of the great transcontinental European, Asiatic and African railway systems of the future, is pregnant with remarkable commercial possibilities. There is no doubt that in a not distant future we shall see Palestine become an important centre for goods and passenger traffic between the three continents of the Old World.

But for the full exploitation of all these possibilities it is essential that a modern and progressive government should replace the present administrative chaos. The efforts of private initiative must be assisted and encouraged by such measures of reform as we have a right to expect from any conscientious Government, such as the creation of accurate land registers, of an agrarian bank, of chambers of commerce, agriculture and industry, and of a uniform currency for the whole country; the construction of convenient harbours and warehouses in the principal towns of the coast; the improvement of the existing roads and the construction of new ones; the establishment, in place of the present tithes, which inflict a crushing burden on gross produce and prevent intensive agriculture, of a rational and equitable system of land-taxes; a radical reform of the law courts and police, so that they may become capable of insuring effective justice and security in the country; the promulgation and execution of modern laws as regards mortgages and transfers of property; and the institution of bounties for agriculture and industry. If these indispensable reforms are put into practice, and if the influx into the country of a numerous, intelligent and industrious population is made possible by establishing once for all the unrestricted right of Jews to immigrate and to acquire land, there is no doubt that, whatever be the political status of Palestine after the war, it will become again—and in a not very distant future—a prosperous country, a happy country and a Jewish country.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

REC'D LD-DE

NOV 08 1991

NOV 08 1991

41584

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND PUBLICATIONS

1. The Jewish National Fund, by Adolph Böhm. 1/-.
2. Merhavia : A Jewish Co-operative Settlement in Palestine. 5d
3. The Yemenite Jews, by Joshua Feldman. 2d.
4. The Herzl Forest. 1½d.
5. Co-operative Colonisation in Palestine. 1d.

To be obtained from the

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND
4, Fulbourne Street, Whitechapel, London, E. 1.

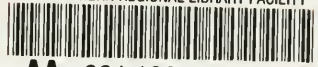
Further Publications are in preparation.

University of California Los Angeles



L 006 377 694 2

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 001 126 022 1

